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Message Text

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10
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 IO-11 ISO-00 FEA-01 ERDA-05 AID-05 CEA-01

CIAE-00 CIEP-01 COME-00 DODE-00 EB-07 FPC-01 H-02

INR-07 INT-05 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 OMB-01 PM-04

USIA-06 SAM-01 OES-03 SP-02 SS-15 STR-04 TRSE-00 PA-01

PRS-01 NRC-05 /110 W
---------- 057781
R 201547Z JAN 76
FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7390
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION EC BRUSSELS
USMISSION OECD PARIS
USMISSION IAEA VIENNA

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS:ENRG, PINT, NL
SUBJECT: DUTCH NUCLEAR FOES: FINGER IN THE DIKE AND HEAD IN THE SAND

1.SUMMARY: THE NETHERLANDS' PROGRAM TO LESSEN ITS DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTED OIL HAS SUFFERED A SETBACK. BY THREATENING A GOVERNMENT CRISIS, OPPONENTS OF NUCLEAR POWER HAVE FORCED THE CABINET TO POSTPONE UNTIL 1977 A DECISION WHICH TAKEN NOW WOULD HAVE ALLOWED THE NATION'S FIRST MAJOR
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REACTOR STATIONS TO BE IN OPERATION BY 1985. END SUMMARY.

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2. PLANS TO HAVE THREE 1,000 MEGAWATT NUCLEAR POWER PLANTS OPEATING IN THE NETHERLANDS BY 1985 HAME BEEN SET ASIDE IN ORDER TO AVERT A THREATENED GOVERNMENT CRISIS. THE CABINET AGREED AT ITS WEEKLY MEETING ON JANAURY 16 TO POST-PONE UNTIL THE SECOND HALF OF 1977 A DECISION WHETHER TO AUTHORIZE THE START OF CONSTRUCTION. THE POOSTPONEMENT WAS A VICTORY FOR THE SMALL RADICAL PARTY (PPR), WHICH MADE THE MATTER A CONDITION FOR ITS REMAINING IN THE GOVERNMENT COALITION, AND A RETREAT BY ECONOMICS MINISTER LUBBERS, WHOSE ENERGY WHITE PAPER OF 1975 RECOMMENDED AMAJOR EXPAN-SION OF NUCLEAR CAPACITY BY 1985 IN ORDER TO LESS THE NETHERLAND' DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTED OIL (SEE FOOTNOTE, PARA 7). TO HAVE MET THAT DATE, THE GMUND WOULD HAVE TO HAVE BEEN TRUNED FOR THE FIRST REACTOR STATION IN EARLY 1977. AS MATTERS STAND NOW, ONLY ONESUCH PLANT COULD BE READY BY 1985, UNER PLANS WHICH CALL FOR A DELAY OF 16 MONTHS BETWEEN COMMENCEMENT OF EACH.

3. IN PUTTING THE DECISION ASIDE,THE CABINET TOOK NOTE OF STUDIES THAT WERE MADE LAST YEAR ON SAFETY, HEALTH AND RISKS, ALL OF WHICH WERE POSITIVE, AND COMMISSIONED YET ANOTHER SET. THE ADDITIONAL STUDIES INCLUDE:

(1) ALL PHASES OF RADIOACTIVE WASTE REPROCESSING,

(2) STORAGE OF WASTE IN ROCK-SALT FORMATIONS,

(3) SHORTENING THE RADIOACTIVE HALF-LIFE OF WASTE, AND

(4) THE ADEQUACY OF THE GOVERNMENT' SUPERVISORY MACHINERY. LUBERS SAID THERE WAS TIME FOR FURTHER STUDY INVIEW OF LOWER ESLJMATES OF THE GROWTH IN ELECTRICITY DEMAND.

4. COMMENT: THE POSTPONEMENT REPRESENTS A SETBACK FOR THE NETHERLANDS' EFFORTS TO LESSEN ITS DEPENDENCE ON IMPORTED OIL AND TO STRETCH THE LIFE OF ITS NATURAL GAS RESERVES. IT ALSO DEMONSTRATES AGAIN THE STRENGTH OF THE ANTI-NUCLEAR LOBBY, WHICH IN THE PAST TWO YEARS HAS SCORED SUCCESSES AGAINST BOTH MILITARY AND VIVILAN USES OF NUCLEAR
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ENERGY. THE THREE PLANTS CALLED FOR BY THE NERGY NOTE OF 1975 WER THEMSELVES FIVE FEWWER THAN THE NUMBER RECOM-MENDED BY THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION IN THE WAKE OF THE ARAB OUL EMBARGO. IN SCALING DOWN THE NUCLEAR PLANS LAST YEAR, ONE REASON LUBBERS CITED WAS THE UNCERTAINTY AMONGTHE PUBLIC REGARDINGTHE ACCEPTABILITY OF NUCLEAR ENERGY . HE HAD HOPED THEN THAT THE STUDIES HE SET IN MOTIONWOULD ALLAY THE DOUBTS. THE FACT THAT THE CLEAR ENDORSEMENT THE STUDY COM-

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MISSIONS GAVE WAS NOT ENOUGH BETRAYS THEMOTIONAL BIAS
OF THE OPPOSTITION.

5. ON THE OTHE HAND, LUBBES AS ECONOMICS MINISTER MAY
NOT HAVE BEEN OVERLY UPSET BY THE DELAY. ALTHOUGH EACH YEAR
OF POSTPONEMENT ADDS TO THE EVENTUAL COST OF THE POWER
PLANTS, A TEMPROARY MORATORIUM EASES THE IMMEDIATE STRAIN
ON THE GOVERNMENT'S FINANCES DURING THE CRITICALLY DIFFI-
CUTL PERIOD IT IS IN. LENDING SUPPORT TO THIS HYPOTHESIS
IS THE POSTPONEMENT AT THE SAME CABINET MEETING JANAURY 16
OF ANOTHERPOTENTIALLY COSTLY SCHEME, WHICH WOULD HAVE SEEN
A BRIDGE BUILT ACROSS THE WESTERSCHELDE RIVER.

6.FINALLY, THE DECISION ON NUCLEAR ENERGY IS ONE MORE
SIGN THAT THIS CABINET WANTSTO REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL THE
END OF ITS TERM IN MAY 1977, SINCE IT OPENLY ADMITTED THAT
THE DEALY PLACES THE BURDER OF DECISION ON THE CABINET THAT
TAKESOFFICE AFTER THE NEXT ELECTIONS.

7. FOOTNOTE: ALTHOUGH LESS THAN SIX PERCENT OF PRESENT
15,000 MEGAWATTS OFINSTALLED CAPACITY IS OIL-FIRED AGAINST
ALMOST 90 PERCENT NATURAL GAS AND TWO PERCENT NUCLEAR,
GOVERNMENT PLANS FOR 1985 HAD CALLED FOR 52 PERCENT TO BE
OIL-FIRED OF THE THEN 14,800 TO 16,900 MAGAWATTS INSTALLED
CAPACITY, THE REMAINDER TO BE MADE UP OF 25 PERCENT NUCLEAR,
13 PERCENT NATURAL GAS AND TEN PERCENT COAL. THE FAILURE
TO CONSTRUCT THE THREE NUCLEAR PLANST WILL MEAN A GREATER
RELIANCE ON OIL, GAS AND COAL.
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